NUMB. LV.

THE PLAIN DEALER.

Eſt modus in rebus, ſunt certi denique fines,
Quos ultra citraque nequit conſiſtere rectum. HOR.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28. 1724.

THE following Letter, from the Gentleman, who oblig'd me with a former, from *Edinburgh*, will ſpeak ſo excellently for *Itſelf*; that the kindeſt Thing I can do for my Reader, will be, to ſay nothing concerning it, which may detain him from the Pleaſure of peruſing it.

Edinburgh, September the 8th. 1724.

SIR,

YOUR Paper of *Friday* the 28th of *Auguſt*, is arriv'd in *North-Britain*, and has occaſion'd much Speculation; but all its Readers, are ſenſibly obliged, by the Reſpect you have ſhewn our Country, and for the Honour you have done the riſing Generation, of both Sexes; and I believe, there is none here, who would not heartily joyn their Acknowledgments with mine on this Occaſion. I may therefore preſume to thank you in the Name of all my Countrymen, who may not uſe the Freedom to write to you: But the Gentlemen of the *Groteſque Club*, whom you have ſo remarkably diſtinguiſh'd, muſt repreſent their Sentiments, in a better Manner than I can; and I will not pretend to ſpeak their Senſe, or anticipate their Gratitude.

Give me Leave, SIR, only to expreſs my Mind in the Sequel. You have brought me under ſtrong Obligations to you, by the Notice you have taken of my Letter. And ſince you ſeem to promiſe to yourſelf, and the World, ſome Intelligence from this Quarter, by means of my propos'd Correſpondence; I cannot but uſe my Endeavours, to anſwer, in ſome Meaſure, your Expectations. You have fix'd me, SIR, in the Character of your *Northern Spy*, and you may depend upon my moſt watchful Fidelity.

Edinburgh being our *Metropolis*, and the Place of my Reſidence, muſt be the chief Scene of Action, and the Date of your Intelligence from *North-Britain*. Here is a vaſt Variety of Humours, Cuſtoms, Manners, and Converſation, to be conſidered. Many Things happen in this Place, that are worthy your Knowledge as a *Plain-Dealer*. Some deſerve Praiſe and Admiration, others Diſpleaſure and Reprehenſion; both Regards may be uſeful, either, as Examples provoking Emulation; or, as Reaſons, warning from Danger: And ſure, your Judgment, SIR, cannot err, in the Improvement and Application, of any Accounts I ſend you.

I beg leave to lay before you, ſeveral of the Advantages, and Diſadvantages of our good Town, before I deſcend to Private Life.

We are bleſt with an able and active *Magiſtracy*. Moſt of Thoſe intruſted with the Superintendency of the City, are Gentlemen of Breeding and Letters, and all have a Bent of Mind, that favours the Publick Grandeur and Emolument. It ſeems to be the united Ambition of our Magiſtrates, to adorn the Place, and by rendring it more beautiful and commodious, to invite new Inhabitants, to increaſe its Treaſure and Revenue. They would ſurmount all the Difficulties it labours under, by a Superiority of Genius: And, as they appear true Friends to the Publick Intereſt, in reſpect of *Trade*; they are not wanting in giving Countenance and Encouragement to *Arts* and *Sciences*. Politeneſs thrives under their Influence, and ſome of them ſet an Example of it to the Youth, in their own Practice and Behaviour. Here, SIR, are few cloudy, heavy-headed Aldermen, whoſe Length of Wigs and Gowns, is their ſole Mark of Dignity. You would take our *Provoſts* for Firſt Miniſters, and our *Bailies* for Courtiers. I have ſeen *Stateſmen*, make a worſe Figure than our *Deacons*, and heard as good Speeches in the *Town-Council* at *Edinburgh*, as at the Council-Board of *Great-Britain*. I wiſh all our *Peers* had Abilities equal to ſome of our *Weavers*, and that every *Clergyman*, had half the Grace of ſome *Bonnet-Makers* of our City.

But, SIR, you know there is no *Body-Politick* perfect; many Things are wanting, to make our City more flouriſhing and fam'd: And, perhaps, the

the greateſt Misfortune we labour under, is Faction and Party. This, SIR, diſcourages many noble Purpoſes, and baffles glorious Undertakings. Self-Love, Pride and Ambition, prevail everywhere, and ſway all Men, more or leſs: Theſe are natural to all Creatures. The Oldeſt Cock is Lord of the Rooſt, and the ſtrongeſt Bull is *Grand Seignior* in his green *Seraglio*; the eldeſt Buck is Tyrant of the Park, and, from his Strength and his Horns, claims a Right to be Chief in Power; and, no doubt, but every individual Creature, of every Species, with the ſame Force, would ſeek and exerciſe the ſame Juriſdiction. But Men are remarkably diſtinguiſhed, by their Love of Precedency, and often add, to their natural Deſire of Governing, a certain low-ſpirited Spleen and Malice. Our worthy Magiſtrates, meet with more Oppoſition and Diſcouragement, from little Pretenders to their Place and Authority, than from any other Cauſe. If the Town-Council, beholds not *Macro*, with the ſame Partiality, with which he conſiders himſelf, he wonders at their Blindneſs, and grows *peeviſh* upon it; for the Root of the Spleen, is often *Pride diſappointed*. Some carry it farther than mere *Envy*, by labouring to undermine and depoſe thoſe who are above them, and commonly the greater the Merit is, the more obnoxious to Ill-will and Reproaches. As the *Red Dragon* purſued the Woman in the *Revelation*, Faction or Private Malice, purſues the moſt deſerving Man; and when it cannot overtake him, it opens its Mouth, and *throws a Flood after him:* People who have not Merit to riſe themſelves, would at leaſt level others. And what has often been my greateſt Wonder, in this Caſe, is, that moſt of our little Jars, are created and carried on by our *Clergy*. Prieſt-Craft is here, as *Infallible* as it is at *Rome*, and our *Popes* are as *abſolute*, to the full Extent of their *Pariſhes*. For my own Part, I have neither Perſonal Partiality for any of the preſent Magiſtrates, nor Prejudice againſt their Adverſaries: I never had, nor ever needed the Favour of any of them. I ſpeak my Senſe freely, and it is the Reſult of juſt Reflexion, and Obſervation. And I heartily wiſh, I had not ſuch Ground, to expoſe the Spirits of any of my Neighbours, to the *Plain-Dealer*. But what a Pity is it, that Faction ſhould deface the Publick Good? And how vile, to plot the Downfal, or calumniate the Fame of Thoſe, whoſe Power is their Country's Bleſſing?

My Concern for the Place of my Birth, has carried me farther than I ought to have allow'd myſelf Liberty; but as I am not to touch this Subject again, you will have the Goodneſs to excuſe, what I judg'd, in ſome reſpects, to be requiſite.

I ſhould not neglect giving you an Account of the State of *Trade* in this Place; nor ought I to paſs over in Silence, the *Univerſity* and *College* of *Juſtice*. Many of the *Clergy* too, deſerve their *Praiſes*, and muſt, upon ſome Occaſions, come under Conſideration: But being unwilling to tire your Patience, and huddle my Materials too much together, I will conclude this Letter, when I have acquainted you, with what the *Ladies* would have *moſt known*, and what every Body here, would be glad to have your Opinion of: I mean, The FAIR ASSEMBLY. This, SIR, conſiſts of our beſt-bred Ladies, of different Qualities and Ages: 'Tis but a late Inſtitution, and, at firſt, was thought to be a proper Theme for our *Paſtors' Sunday* Sermons; all our Pulpits rail'd againſt it, as they did, of Old, againſt *Perukes* and *Tobacco*. But the holy Fire is now much ſpent, and we are at Liberty to meet in our great Hall, without Danger of the *Kirk*'s *Anathema*; nay, ſome of the Wives and Daughters of the *Sanctified*, begin of late, to grace our Fellowſhip. For my own Part, I deſpair not to ſee the *Reverend* themſelves, eating Sweatmeats in our Company: and mixing, innocently, in our Country Dances. And I own, notwithſtanding they are worthy Ladies, of undiſputed Virtue and Honour, who preſide over the *Fair Aſſembly*, I ſhould be better pleas'd to ſee at our Head, a *Moderator* from the *General One*. Slander and Detraction would fly before him, and innocent Freedom, and Chriſtian Communion wou'd be cheriſhed by his Influence. Husbands would allow their Wives to go into Company, without Jealouſy, and Parents ſend their Daughters, without fear of their leaving behind them any thing, that they ought to bring back again. But till that *Halcyon* Day arrives, we muſt be contented with the want of *Sanction*, and dance, and drink Tea without them. I ſhall ſay more of our *Fair Aſſembly* hereafter, and at preſent only ſubſcribe myſelf,

Sage SIR,

Your Truſty Spy,

and Humble Servant,

FERGUS BRUCE.

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